

# **Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission**

## **Commission Meeting**

**Room 500, Truman State Office Building**

**Jefferson City, MO 6510**

**January 13, 2010**

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Members Attending:** Dalton Wright, Chair; Jeff Bloemker; Kent Thomas; Senator Frank Barnitz; Senator Bill Stouffer; Representative Terry Witte, Vice Chair; Sherry L. Anderson; and Marcy Mealy.

**Others attending:** Colonel Dennis Sandbothe (Ret.) Executive Assistant for Brigadier General Stephen Danner; Sergeant Major Roger Layman (Ret.); Melissa Wilding, MO Veterans Commission; and Rachel Wheeler, Whiteman Air Force Base Liaison.

**Guests:** Helen Thompson, Chief Informatics Officer at Heartland Health and O-5 Navy Reservist; Leslie Thompson, Navy (Ret.); and Pat Rowe Kerr, Senior Advisor on Veterans Outreach.

Chair Wright opened the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Minutes from July 1, 2009 meeting; September 15, 2009 legislative sub-committee meeting; October 1, 2009 meeting; October 14, 2009 meeting; November 25, 2009 conference call ; and December 9, 2009 conference call were approved.

## **Commission Business Meeting**

### **Review of proposed legislation**

Rep. Witte and Ms. Anderson discussed the list of bills (sent in Commissioners' meeting packet) that have been filed to date that relate to issues of potential interest to the Commission. Ms. Anderson will provide a regular update to the members on the progress of these bills.

**House Bill 1208** sponsored by Rep. David Day, MMPEC Commissioner adds to existing law, the person designated by a military member in a United States Department of Defense form to the term next-of-kin as it relates to the right of sepulcher in final disposition of the decedent's remains.

**House Bills 1220 and 1221** establishes the Global War on Terrorism Medallion Program and creates the Global War on Terrorism Veterans' Recognition Award Fund. The Commissioners voiced concern regarding the funding of the program and Colonel Sandbothe volunteered to research the issue regarding the fiscal note and report back to the Commission at the next meeting.

House Bill 1224 sponsored by Representative Joe Smith establishes the Missouri National Guard and the Missouri Reservists Family Education Grant Program.

House Bill 1393 sponsored by Jeanne Kirkton allows for a special license plate designated 'VIETNAM ERA MILITARY VETERAN' for any person who served in any branch of the United States armed forces during the Vietnam conflict. The Commissioners discussed their concerns that this legislation might be offensive to the "Gold Star Family" program.

House Bill 1524 sponsored by Representative Scott Largent requires the Adjutant General to establish the Missouri Youth Challenge Academy for at-risk high school age youth. The residential military-based academy will provide work experience and training in life skills, citizenship, life-coping and academic skills, among others. The Missouri Youth Challenge Foundation Fund is created consisting of gifts, donations, appropriations, transfers, and bequests. The Adjutant General is authorized to make grants from the fund to support the academy.

House Bill 1530 sponsored by Representative Joe Smith requires Missouri state employees to be compensated an amount equal to the difference between their military compensation and their state salary when called up for certain active military duty.

Senate Bill 733 sponsored by Senator David Pearce, makes changes to the Bright Flight Scholarship Program. One change to the bill effecting military personnel states: "if a scholarship recipient cannot attend an approved institution because of military service with the United States Armed Forces, the student will receive a scholarship if he or she returns to full-time status within six months after ending military service." A press release was sent out on by the Senator's Office on January 7<sup>th</sup> announcing that he filed this legislation.

Discussion continued about 2010 legislative issues affecting military personnel and their families.

*Rachel Wheeler, Liaison Whiteman Air Force Base*

Rachel Wheeler stated that Senator Pearce had conveyed his concerns regarding the issue of high school age children of a "Mission Essential Personnel" parent that are required to live in certain locations and the school district may not offer certain sports or opportunities for the student. Senator Pearce stated that his past experience with this type of language has been perceived as the first step to opening up the "open enrollment" battle and could put our legislative efforts in fracas and jeopardize its chances of passage.

Ms. Wheeler announced that Whiteman Air Force Base had recently purchased 1,200 acres for Base expansion. The Commission discussed the idea of generating a "White Paper" outlining the economic impact of the Base expansion to the local and state economy.

*Melissa Wilding, Missouri Veterans Commission*

Melissa Wilding, representing the Veteran Commission's Director, Larry Kay reported that the Veterans Commission's Veterans Listening Posts 2009 Report has been presented to the Governor and is available on-line. The report is a joint report by the Missouri Veterans Commission and Veterans Service Partners regarding the needs of the Missouri's Veterans.

*Col. Dennis Sandbothe (Ret.), Executive Assistant to Brigadier General Stephen Danner, Adjutant General, Missouri National Guard*

Col. Dennis Sandbothe reported that "Show-Me Heroes" will be announced by the Governor later this month. The program offers a \$4,500 tax credit to those who are willing to employ returning Guardsmen. The program will work with communities and chambers of commerce to ensure employment opportunities are there for Guard members.

Missouri celebrated the National Guard's 373rd birthday with a formal ball at the Lake of the Ozarks where more than 380 Citizen-Soldiers, Airman, Families and distinguished guests gathered to recognize the organization for many great accomplishments from 1636 to 2009.

The ceremony recognized 11 Airmen and their Family members of Headquarters, Missouri Air National Guard. These Airmen received the honor for deploying for more than 30 consecutive days in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and Noble Eagle, as well as other peacekeeping operations across the world since Sept. 11, 2001. The ceremony was the first of its kind for the Air National Guard, said adjutant general Brig. Gen. Stephen Danner.

#### **Other Issues Raised by Public Comments**

Commission member Jeff Bloemker introduced his guest, Helen Thompson, the Chief Informatics Officer at Heartland Health and O-5 Navy Reservist.

Ms. Thompson stated she was attending the Commission meeting to present information regarding a policy change in the GI bill. The policy allows an individual approved to transfer an entitlement to educational assistance to: 1) The individual's spouse; 2) One or more of the individual's children; and 3) Any combination of spouse and child.

Ms. Thompson is concerned with the wording of "eligible dependent" because it is not clearly defined in the policy, and the absence of a definition, it could be left to different interpretations.

A motion was made by Representative Terry Witte and seconded by Kent Thomas to have the Commission send a letter to Congressman Ike Skelton, Chairman of the Armed Service Committee, requesting a review of the intent of term "eligible dependent" as stated in Educational Assistance Benefits, Post 9/11 GI Bill-Chapter 33 of Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.) (Reference (a)) for carrying out the Post-9/11 GI Bill-Transferability of Unused Education Benefits to Family Member policy. The motion was adopted.

## Other Business and New Business

### *Pat Rowe Kerr*

Pat Rowe Kerr, former Veteran's Commission Ombudsman, announced she is now the Senior Advisor on Veterans Outreach for "The Mission Continues Center" for the Center for Citizen Leadership.

Chair Wright announced that Maggie Martin and General Martin will be leaving Fort Leonard Wood and a new person will be assuming the position of FLW liaison.

Chair Wright stated that many states do not allow military spouses to claim unemployment if they leave their jobs to move with a military spouse. In those states, the loss of the job is considered voluntary and therefore ineligible for benefits. Clearly, it isn't really voluntary if the spouse is moving. Florida's unemployment compensation law (Fla. Chapter 443.101) states: For benefit years beginning on or after July 1, 2004, an individual is not disqualified under this subsection for voluntarily leaving work to relocate as a result of his or her military-connected spouse's permanent change of station order, activations orders, or unit deployment orders.

Chair Wright suggested a letter be sent to Mary Nelson, Director of Boards and Commissions-Governor's Office requesting the Governor appoint members to 12-member Interstate Compact Council. Missouri was one of the first ten states to adopt the Compact along with: Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, and Oklahoma. North Carolina became the eleventh state to adopt the Compact, with other states expected to take action when their states legislatures reconvene in 2009

Chairman Wright noted that Governor Nixon has a model of the B-2 proudly displayed on his desk in the Governor's Office. Rachel Wheeler noted that she and her husband had been invited by Governor Jay Nixon and First Lady Georgann to the Mansion for dinner and her husband presented the Governor with the gift at that time.

### Next Meeting

Chairman Wright scheduled the next Commission meeting for Thursday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, DED Conference Room-Room 680 Truman Building, Jefferson City. A lunch will be served at noon with the business meeting beginning at 1:00 p.m.

### Adjourn

With no further business Mr. Thomas moved and Mr. Bloemker seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion approved. Chairman Dalton Wright called the January 13, 2010 meeting adjourned.

Minutes Approved:

Chairman Dalton Wright

Date